




John Andrew

PLAYS
BY
LEONID ANDREYEFF

THE BLACK MASKERS
THE LIFE OF MAN
THE SABINE WOMEN

TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN BY
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WITH AN INTRODUCTORY ESSAY BY
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PREFACE

THE present versions of "The Life of Man" and "The Black Maskers" are based respectively on the texts printed in the seventh and tenth volumes of the "Collected Works" of Andreyeff, published by the Prosveshchenie Company, of Petrograd; the version of "The Sabine Women" is based on the Russian text published by J. Ladyschnikow, in Berlin.

The spelling *Andreyeff* employed in this volume is adopted to secure conformity with the spelling *Tchekoff* adopted in the companion volume "Plays by Tchekoff." A more scientific transliteration would be *Andreev*.

The translators desire to express their appreciation of the courtesy of the author in extending to them permission to translate the three plays included in this volume, as well as other dramas, and also to acknowledge with gratitude the aid received from Mr. Leonid Borisovich Moiseyeff, of Tomsk, Siberia.

THE TRANSLATORS.

ANN ARBOR, MICH.,
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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

THE life of Leonid Nikolaivich Andreyeff has been uneventful. He was born on August 9, 1871, in the city of Orel, which is situated about two hundred miles south of Moscow, in the country of the Great Russians. The father, whose income was always small, died while Andreyeff was a student in the city high school. From that time until his graduation from the law department of Moscow University, at the age of twenty-six, Andreyeff suffered greatly from lack of means, and three times he was led by discouragement to attempt suicide. In childhood and youth he manifested some aptitude for drawing and painting. Indeed, he supported himself in part during his university career in Petrograd and Moscow by painting portraits, but, owing to lack of proper instruction, such endowments as he possessed in this line remained undeveloped. From childhood he was an insatiable reader, and at an early age he had read all the Russian classics and such foreign authors as had been translated into his native tongue. In 1897 he attempted the practice of law, but, meeting with no success and apparently possessing no aptitude for the profession, he turned to newspaper reporting and later to feuilleton writing for the *Moscow Courier*. A number of these early sketches are republished in collected editions of his works. Since 1898 he has devoted himself exclusively to literature, residing first in Moscow and later in Petrograd. In 1906, finding the distractions of a large city too serious an impediment to his literary work, he

built a country home on a picturesque site at Terioki, a much-frequented summer resort in Finland. As Terioki is only thirty miles by rail from Petrograd, Andreyeff here enjoys to a large extent the advantages of both country and city. Andreyeff has steadily refused to take an active part in the political life of his day and has never allied himself with any party, believing that party creeds and dogmas are incompatible with the freedom of art.

Very near the beginning of Andreyeff's literary career one of his stories attracted the attention of Gorki, who was at that time at the height of his fame, and who lent Andreyeff much encouragement and assistance. In 1901 Andreyeff suddenly became famous through the publication of a small volume of stories which dealt with certain vital problems of Russian society. Since that time his writings have been exceedingly popular. His plays have been enthusiastically received and have had long runs in the theatres, while the printed editions of his works have been rapidly exhausted. An edition of eighteen thousand copies of "King Hunger," for example, was sold out in a single day. Notwithstanding the intense interest with which his writings have been received, it has been his lot to awaken some resentment and even indignation, and to call forth storms of adverse criticism in some quarters. In this respect his fate has been the fate of Tolstoi and most other great Russian writers, and the opposition to him is accounted for in the same manner. As a critic of society Andreyeff is interested not in the outer events of life, but in character. Consequently his writings are devoted exclusively to the revelation of certain qualities of men's minds and hearts. His pictures of the evils of Russian society are so vivid and the implied censures on society so severe that, although his merits have been fully and cheerfully acknowledged by the reading public as a whole,

a certain portion of the public, blinded by passion or prejudice, refuse even to admit the existence of the perverted mental states which Andreyeff, as a great artist and prophet, has seen and described. Such impassioned attacks, however, will be regarded by the sober-minded as an indication of the clearness of his vision, and as a tribute to his marvellous descriptive powers.
